

And that kind of spiked that by saying, no, I didn't talk to him, and that the – you know, my misleading Eckstein in that context just wasn't very significant to the issue that Senator McCain was interested in, which was improper influence.⁷¹⁹

He also conceded that, contrary to his flat denial in the letter he wrote to Sen. McCain, he has had contact with high level White House staff on Interior Department matters having to do with Indian gaming issues. However, he denied that the contact was in the form of directing the outcome of a particular agency decision.

Regarding his motivation for addressing the Eckstein discussion as he did in the letter to Thompson, Babbitt volunteered that, in his Aug. 30, 1996, letter to Sen. McCain, he was trying to be “oblique,” and when the issue came up again with Sen. Thompson in October 1997, he knew that he “needed to be more forthcoming.”⁷²⁰ He further agreed that he knew that, if the Senate Committee concluded that he had lied to or deliberately misled Sen. McCain, it would lend credence to the argument that he was trying to conceal something truly awful about the Hudson decision:

Q: But getting back to the earlier points that you made in response to my question, isn't it true that you were embarrassed by the alleged remarks, Mr. Eckstein's version of your remarks?

A: Oh, yes.

Q: Because you knew that they looked bad to others.

A: Absolutely.

⁷¹⁹*Id.* at 230.

⁷²⁰*Id.* at 290-91.